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THE
OPINION of the PARLIAMENT.
ABOUT
RELIGION:
BEING THE
VOTES of the Honourable House of COMMONS,
Concerning
TOLERATION.

Die Mercurii 25. Feb. 15. C A R. II. Reg.

Resolved, *nemine contradicente*,

THAT the humble thanks of this House be returned to his Majesty, for his Resolution to maintain the Act of Uniformity.

Resolved, That it be presented to the Kings Majesty as the humble Advice of this House, That no Indulgence be granted to the Dissenters from the Act of Uniformity.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

THe Knights, Citizens, and Burgeses, of the Commons House of Parliament, did with great Joy receive Your Majesties most Gracious Speech, at the opening this Session of Parliament, and being thereby invited to consider of your Declaration of the Twenty sixth of December last; they have with all Sobriety, Duty, and Affection, examined the grounds thereof; and do by me present unto Your Majesty, Their most hearty Thanks for the same, and humble Advice thereupon; both which, I do beseech your Majesty, that You will vouchsafe me to deliver in their own words.

May it please Your most excellent Majesty,

WE Your Majesties most Dutiful and Loyal Subjects, the Knights, Citizens and Burgeses of the House of Commons in Parliament Assembled, having with all Fidelity and Obedience, considered of the several matters comprised in Your Majesties late Gracious Declaration of the 26th. of December last, and your most Gracious Speech at the beginning of this present Session,

Do, in the first place for our selves, and in the names of all the Commons of *England*, render to your sacred Majesty, the tribute of our most hearty thanks; for that infinite grace and goodness, wherewith your Majesty hath been pleased to publish your Royal Intentions of adhering to your Act of Indemnity, and Oblivion, by a constant and religious observance of it. And our hearts are further enlarged in these returns of Thanksgivings; when we consider your Majesties most Princely and Heroick Professions of relying upon the Affections of your people, and abhorring all sort of military and arbitrary rule. But above all, We can never enough remember, to the honour of your Majesties piety, and our unspeakable comfort, those solemn and most endearing invitations of us your Majesties Subjects to prepare *Laws* to be presented to your Majesty, against the growth and increase of *Papery*; and withal, to provide more *Laws* against licentiousness and impiety; at the same time declaring your own resolutions for maintaining the *Act of Uniformity*. And it becomes us always to acknowledge and admire your Majesties wisdom in this your *Declaration*, whereby your Majesty is pleased to resolve, not only by sumptuary *Laws*, but by your own royal example of frugality, to restrain that excess in mens expences, which is grown so general and so exorbitant; and to direct our Endeavours to find out fit and proper *Laws* for advancement of Trade and Commerce.

After this we most humbly beseech your Majesty to believe, That it is with extream unwillingness and reluctancy of heart, that we are brought to differ from any thing which your Majesty hath thought fit to propose; And though we do no way doubt, but that the unreasonable disempers of mens spirits, and the many mutinies and conspiracies, which were carried on during the late intervals of *Parliament*, did reasonably incline your Majesty to endeavour by your *Declaration* to give some small allay to those ill humours, till the *Parliament* assembled, and the hopes of Indulgence, if the *Parliament* should consent to it, especially seeing the pretenders to

this Indulgence, did seem to make some titles to it, by virtue of your Majesties *Declaration* from *Breda*. Nevertheless, we your Majesties most dutiful and loyal Subjects, who are now returned to serve in *Parliament*, from those several parts and places of your Kingdom, for which we are chosen, Do humbly offer to your Majesties great wisdom, That it is in no sort advisable that there be any Indulgence to such persons who presume to dissent from the *Act of Uniformity*, and the *Religion* established,

For these Reasons,

WE have considered the nature of your Majesties *Declaration* from *Breda*, and are humbly of opinion, That your Majesty ought not to be pressed with it any further,

Because it is not a promise in it self, but only a gracious *Declaration* of your Majesties intentions, to do what in you lay, and what a *Parliament* should advise your Majesty to do, and no such advice was ever given, or thought fit to be offered; nor could it be otherwise understood, because there were *Laws of Uniformity* then in being, which could not be dispenced with, but by *Act of Parliament*.

They who do pretend a right to that supposed promise, put the right into the hands of their *Representatives*, whom they chose to serve for them in this *Parliament*, who have passed, and your Majesty consented to the *Act of Uniformity*. If any shall presume to say, that a right to the benefit of this *Declaration* doth still remain after this *Act* passed,

It tends to dissolve the very bonds of *Government*, and to suppose a disability in your Majesty and the *Houses of Parliament* to make a *Law* contrary to any part of your Majesties *Declaration*, though both *Houses* should advise your Majesty to it.

We have also considered the nature of the *Indulgence* proposed, with reference to those Consequences, which must necessarily attend it.

It will establish *Schism* by a *Law*, and make the whole *Government* of the *Church* precarious, and the *Censures* of it of no moment or consideration at all.

It will no way become the gravity or wisdom of a *Parliament*, to pass a *Law* at one Session for *Uniformity*, and at the next Session (the reasons of *Uniformity* continuing still the same) to pass another *Law* to frustrate or weaken the execution of it.

It will expose your Majesty to the restless importunity of every *Sect* or *Opinion*, and of every single person also, who shall presume to dissent from the *Church of England*.

It will be a cause of increasing *Sects* and *Sectaries*, whose numbers will weaken the true *Protestant Profession* so far, that it will at least be difficult for it, to defend it self against them: And, which is yet further considerable, these Numbers, which by being troublesome to the *Government*, find they can arrive to an *Indulgence*, will, as their Numbers increase, be yet more troublesome, that so at length they may arrive to a general Toleration, which your Majesty hath declared against, and in time, some prevalent *Sect*, will at last contend for an establishment, which, for ought can be foreseen, may end in *Popery*.

It is a thing altogether without *Precedent*, and will take away all means of convicting *Recusants*, and be inconsistent with the method and proceedings of the *Laws of England*.

Lastly, It is humbly conceived, that the *Indulgence* proposed, will be so far from tending to the Peace of the *Kingdom*, that it is rather likely to occasion great disturbance. And on the contrary, That the asserting of the *Laws*, and the *Religion* established, according to the *Act of Uniformity*, is the most probable means to produce a sealed Peace and Obedience throughout your *Kingdom*: Because the variety of *Professions* in *Religion*, when openly indulged, doth directly distinguish men into parties, and withal, gives them opportunity to count their Numbers; which, considering the animosities, that out of a Religious pride will be kept on foot by the several *Factions*, doth tend directly and inevitably to open disturbance. Nor can your Majesty have any Security, that the Doctrine or Worship of the several *Factions*, which are all Governed by a several Rule, shall be consistent with the Peace of your *Kingdom*.

And if any persons shall presume to disturb the Peace of the *Kingdom*, We do in all humility declare, That we will for ever, and on all Occasions, be ready with our utmost endeavour and assistance, to adhere to, and serve your Majesty, according to our bounden Duty and Allegiance.

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